

# After Tskhinvali

## Interests and Values

*Throughout the armed conflict in the Caucasus, Russia demonstrated its might and proved itself right; the end of the battles also marked the end of the period of Russia's "pro-Western orientation," its trust in mythical "universal values."*

Aleksandr Dugin

## A Renewal of the Discussion

In the Western press the events in Tskhinvali and the Russian–Georgian conflict started a new thread in the discussion of interests and values. Even though in the present period the laws of war and propaganda are primary, and any formula that will besmirch Russia and demonize our behavior in Georgia while portraying [President Mikheil] Saakashvili as a victim can be invoked, more serious points still make it through the flow of the information war: for example, attempts to analyze how the Georgian–Ossetian conflict is connected to the situation in Yugoslavia or the U.S. invasion of Iraq or what does and does not constitute a precedent. Against an overall backdrop of anti-Russian hysteria, the first voices are heard questioning the balance of interests and values. So, how has Russia's decisive action in Georgia influenced the balance of interests and values?

## Interests and Rules

Participants in the discussion on the balance of values and interests in the twenty-first century, which has been ongoing in the West European and American press in recent years, acknowledge the obvious fact that great and regional powers have their own interests. These interests—like those of an individual group, company, or country—may clash with the interests of other groups and other countries. This is an attribute of interests: they are selfish by definition. Such interests often lead to conflicts and exacerbate tension, as each group tries to expand its zone of control at the expense of others. The main question here is how to find a formula that enables us to legitimately defend our interests while recognizing certain general rules. Those rules—their structure and content—constitute the most fundamental issue in international relations. The rules are designed to regulate conflicts of interests.

But the rules themselves are not pulled from a hat; they formalize a real balance of forces, calling on all players to act within the existing status quo. After the disintegration of the USSR, the rules changed rapidly as the alignment of forces changed. The rules of bipolarity gave way to the unipolar world that was emerging before our eyes; and therefore, the model for regulating conflicting interests assumed a new shape, with the United States as the primary reference point. In this situation, U.S. interests were gradually identified with the "public good" and with support for the world order. This shift in the balance of forces introduced a significant correction to the interpretation of which interests should be considered legitimate or illegitimate.

The clearest interpretation came from American neoconservatives, who wholly identified American interests with world interests, leaving everybody else only the freedom to travel in the wake of U.S. policy and adapt their interests to it. In the unipolar model of the world, the only local or regional interests that could be considered legitimate were those that at a minimum did not contradict American interests. All others were classified as illegitimate, based on might making right and the victory won in the cold war, of which the Americans and their allies throughout the world were confident.

Whereas in the past the interests of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact countries, which could be questioned only in the “no man’s land” of the third world, were regarded as legitimate (while the actions of nonaligned countries, which skillfully maneuvered between the poles, could be considered partially legitimate), now the situation has changed dramatically: the United States has usurped the right to determine the legitimacy or illegitimacy of interests.

### **From Interests to Values**

Now let us talk about values. In recent years, the West European and American press has increasingly endorsed the idea that values must prevail over interests in the twenty-first century. As a rule, values in general were understood to mean the values of the Western world: human rights, democracy, a free market, liberalism, global security, and ecology. The aggregate of these Western values was declared “universal.” Being universal, they must be accepted and shared by all countries and peoples, including those whose interests are clearly in conflict.

According to this approach, values bring nations together, whereas interests divide them. Under the aegis of shared values, those who adhere to these values are expected to sacrifice their political, economic, strategic, and geopolitical interests. The absolute values of human life, social development, freedom and democracy, sacred private property, and so on demand that competition over interests be transferred to new forms that will ban many methods that countries have used for centuries to defend their interests. Above all, they will limit the use of military methods and other types of force.

### **The United States Defines Its Interests as Universal Values**

It soon became obvious that many greeted this benevolent offer to be guided primarily by values rather than interests with skepticism. It immediately became clear that in trying to assure everyone of its adherence to values, the main arbiter of the unipolar world, the United States, was cynically pursuing its own interests. It so happened that the Americans declared their national interests to be the criteria for the universal system of values. This identification stripped the discussion on the victory of values over interests of its moral pathos, since the Americans did not intend to provide even a single example of a case in which they placed values above their own interests. On the contrary, they continued to act selfishly and cynically, as when they refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol and other documents on environmental protection.

Instead of admitting that America occupied Iraq because it wants to control the natural resources of the Middle East, as it would have done in the nineteenth century, Washington has said something different. The Americans have officially dubbed their cynical invasion, which has no legal or logical justification, a value based phenomenon: “promotion of democracy” and punishment of “Saddam Hussein’s terrorist regime.”

### **Different Peoples Have Different Values**

There is also another consideration here. Why, we may ask, has humanity accepted as universal the values of freedom and democracy, human rights, a market economy, social progress, and technological development? This is a fundamental question that the Western press hardly ever asks. After all, if we look at the number of people who live on our planet today, we will see that the overwhelming majority of humanity holds quite different values. For example, the market and democracy do not follow from

the social and political history of Hindu (Indian) society, where a caste system persists. A billion people live there. Those values are absolutely not characteristic of Chinese tradition, within which another billion people live. Another billion Muslims have their own, quite different views on what must be considered the highest value: most important here would be fear of God and the observance of religious tenets. The same can be said about the peoples of Africa and the peoples of the East as a whole—including Russia, since the values of the market, liberal democracy, and social progress, as the West interprets these, are not taken for granted in Russian history and by Russian society, which adhered to quite different values in the overwhelming majority of historical stages (both before and after the Revolution). A contemporary Chinese or Indian or Russian citizen does not accept without question the values that a contemporary European or American would take for granted. The values may attract or repel, but the major point here is that they are not universal.

### **Russia Is Not a European Country but a Eurasian Civilization**

We have here two [value] substitutions: (1) West European values are presented as universal; and (2) Americans are guided by their own interests while pretending to defend those values. It turns out that the entire discussion of interests and values is patent propaganda, an attempt to imbed two false ideas in the human mind. The first falsehood is that the Western system of values is universal. When Putin and Medvedev announced “Russia is a European country,” they testified that they had been hypnotized by the idea of the universality of Western values—even though Russia is not, in fact, a European country but a Eurasian civilization.

The theme of values, even in its initial, neutral stage, clearly contained a certain hidden racism. One part of humanity—the “advanced,” “progressive,” and “civilized” segment—is selected as the model or standard of reference, and all other historical experiments and sociopolitical systems are declared “imperfect,” “backward,” and “barbarian.”

The second substitution is even more cynical: universal values equal U.S. interests. Here I would remind you of the origins of this assertion. This is the Woodrow Wilson Doctrine, declared by the U.S. president who in the early twentieth century and during World War I declared that the main goal of the United States was to spread democracy throughout the world. According to this doctrine, the American system of governance is the optimal model for human development, so that the United States not only can but should interfere in world politics and establish its own principles there. To implement this idea, the Council on Foreign Relations was set up in the 1920s. In fact, the idea of creating a “World Government” became popular—which, by approving the American model as universal, would have subjugated other countries and peoples to the American ideological structure. Thus, the idea of identifying American values and interests with universal values has a long, almost hundred-year history.

### **Tskhinvali Puts an End to the Discussion of Values**

All the substitutions and paradoxes of the discussion on values and interests were clearly exposed by the events in Tskhinvali. The Georgian leader, Mikheil Saakashvili, attacked Russia. Yes, this was an attack on Russia, as the Georgian troops shot at our peacekeepers and subjected our citizens (the old men, children, and women of South Ossetia) to premeditated genocide. Nevertheless, the West and the United States, which support Saakashvili, act as if none of this happened and continue to extend their full support to Saakashvili who “is heroically fighting against Russian aggression.” According to this scenario, Saakashvili, on the one hand, serves U.S. interests, since he has offered to host American military bases in Georgia. On the other hand, in terms of values, he is a “bearer of democracy” against

the “authoritarian Russian regime.” The fact that Saakashvili, who is “good” in terms of American values and “advantageous” from the standpoint of American interests, is behaving in the most outrageous way, killing peaceful civilians and shooting wounded peacekeepers in the back of the head, does not prevent the Americans from completely taking his side.

After Russia saved the peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from genocide by decisively and symmetrically responding to a direct military challenge, it recognized the political right of the South Ossetians and Abkhazians to create their own states. How should this Russian behavior be classified in terms of values and interests?

Above all, it is quite obvious that Moscow was indeed guided by values in its reaction to the attack on Tskhinvali, but our interpretation of these values turns out to differ fundamentally from that of the West. Let us call a spade a spade: Russia believes that the individual right to life is a supreme value. If outright genocide of an entire people is taking place before our eyes, Russia considers itself obliged to interfere, especially since we are speaking here about citizens of the Russian Federation and a conflict that is taking place at the periphery of our state borders. Even though the United States and the Western community do not regard the mass extermination of the Ossetians as genocide and do not label the shelling of a peaceful city with Grad launchers and heavy artillery a crime, Russia is challenging such double standards. If genocide is not genocide, the killing of peaceful residents is not killing, and a crime is not a crime, then we question the existence of universal values: this is what Russia said in August 2008. If the West’s moral values permit it to ignore obvious facts, then we apologize, but we must part ways. In this respect, Russia has not sacrificed its values. After decades of pro-Western hypnosis, in South Ossetia and Abkhazia Russia began for the first time to act based on its own interpretation of good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable, impossible and criminal. Here we ran into an important reality. Our interpretation of the highest value (for example, the right to life of an individual or a people) conflicts with quite different views in the United States and the West.

## **We Stood Up for Our Values, So We Are Right**

We have parted ways in terms of values. That is the fundamental issue. We reacted to what seemed to us the most obvious point: a people’s right to existence. Here we are consistent as never before: we accept the right to life not only of South Ossetians or Abkhazians but also of Albanians, Croats, or Bosnians—and of Serbs, whether they live in Serbia or in enclaves that already belong to other states. Moscow insisted on the principle that Serbs should not be subjected to genocide at the hands of Albanians and Croats and on the principle that Kosovo Albanians should not be subjected to genocide at the hands of Serbs. Russia condemned campaigns of ethnic cleansing carried out by Serbs (if such campaigns did take place), as well as campaigns of ethnic cleansing directed against Serbs. We did not defend the Serbs no matter what but instead strove for fairness. As a result, we expressed rather mild and cautious opposition to the United States, for example, in regard to Yugoslavia. The Americans, in contrast, abused this system of values to serve their own interests.

In brief, since Tskhinvali Russia has completely overcome the hypnosis of the allegedly “universal” system of values. This is an important moment.

In August 2008 Russia abandoned that chimerical consensus, that hypnotic community of people who share universal Western values. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this event, which has enormous consequences. For Russia, a single world value system no longer exists. In our interpretations of what is and is not a value, which values are supreme and which are secondary, we will now rely only on ourselves.

Our society is again rediscovering the treasure of our national traditions, both in their monarchical and their Soviet editions. In reality, Russians, especially thinking Russians, have always clearly understood

that the values of Russian society, which draw on Orthodox tradition and history, differ significantly from those of the West. Only in the 1990s were we implanted with the chimerical idea of a universal political and economic path of social progress and technological development, which only our orientation toward the West can guarantee. Since Tskhinvali, we are realizing that it was all a lie: there is no shared system of values. There is a Western and American value system, and there are Russian, Chinese, Iranian, and Indian systems. These systems interpret the most elementary things in different ways.

Hence from the standpoint of values we must regard each incident as an individual case. From now on, there should be no demagoguery about the universality of values, no projects by supporters of a “World Government” in Russia, no slogans insisting that the West is an absolute marker permitting no alternative type of development, and no statements that “Russia is a European country.” If we are a European country, then the West is not European. Thus we would deprive the West of its right to be Europe and end up with geographic nonsense.

It is much easier to draw a different conclusion: Russia is a unique Eurasian civilization. Our system of values is special: it regards the mass killings of peaceful Ossetians as a crime that we must not tolerate. Having seen the Western countries’ stance on the tragedy in Tskhinvali, we have finally put an end to the question of whether Russia is a European country. Russia cannot be a European country, if European countries have achieved a consensus on the events in Georgia by declaring us the “aggressor” and the perpetrators of genocide “innocent victims.”

### **We Stood Up for Our Interests, So We Are Strong**

Now let us discuss the second part of the question, our interests: did Russia succeed in defending its interests in Abkhazia and Ossetia? We have to admit that it did. It was not our primary goal or our main goal; nevertheless, it must also be mentioned. Yes, we succeeded in defending our interests when faced by those who wanted to advance their interests at our expense. This means that we acted without fault from any point of view, defending both our values and our interests. In terms of values, we hope that other participants in the international process will understand our position, given that not everyone accepts and supports the American double standards. Everyone else should accept the defense of our interests as a fait accompli and proof of our strength. We need not try to justify it; they should merely accept it as fact.

We have shown, however, that we have abandoned the line of reasoning that equates only American interests with universal values, while everything that contradicts those interests is “criminal.”

In Tskhinvali, we defended our values and our interests and behaved as an independent civilization: not merely as a country with its own interests but as a civilization, since we are talking values here. Only a civilization can develop a system of values. What happened in August 2008 in Georgia was not merely a rupture with the United States and its followers at the level of interests (that is secondary). Most important is that those events completely exposed an insuperable conflict at the level of values, a conflict between us and them.

### **The End of Russian Westernizers**

Who are “they,” those who stand on the other side of the barricades? They are the people we recently viewed as “bearers of universal values.” Whereas we used to argue with them at the level of interests, stating that we did not want to give up our positions on certain issues, our conflict with the West has now become quite different, more profound and qualitative in nature (something that, by the way, has

kept our society alive and formed our policies throughout the course of our national history in one way or another). The time has come to dispel all illusions regarding the universal nature of the West. Another reason why the situation is more than favorable, I am convinced, is that nothing has yet been finalized in Georgia. This is only the beginning of a fundamental conflict that will spread to various areas of life: social, political, economic, cultural, and possibly military arenas. Since we are only at the beginning of these developments, today we absolutely must realize that in Tskhinvali Russia buried the idea of the universality of Western values. From now on, we will take a different attitude toward the formation of international policies, which we will encounter in dealing with various countries. The experience that we bought with blood in Tskhinvali will open our eyes to many things: the West's attitude toward Iran, Syria, North Korea, the Palestinian Authority, and China. We will begin to view many things differently. The hypnosis of the "World Government" is over; the suggestion of our Westernizers, who are in essence a fifth column, no longer works. Those who still advocate universal values after the events in Tskhinvali can no longer be regarded as people in error. They are just traitors, and martial law must be applied to them. They may well have been mistaken when they held such positions prior to Tskhinvali, but now they can no longer maintain it with impunity. If such people still exist (and, alas, they do), they should be treated as moral outlaws.

There were people who welcomed the capture of Russia by Napoleon or Hitler. There were Vlasovites, who switched sides to fight for Hitler, but we know how martial law was applied to such people. I would like to remind you that Molotov and Ribbentrop signed a pact—the Non-Aggression Pact—and the Soviet leadership entertained illusions of peace with Nazi Germany. But after 22 June 1941 those illusions were dispelled; and Germanophiles, supporters of friendship between the USSR and Germany, physically could not remain. So it is in our time: before August 2008 we could have Westernizers, but since that date they simply cannot exist.

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